

FANTASTIC 1950s EC COMICS!



NO. 13
SEPT

SHOCK



200
2TH
CANADA

SUSPENSTORIES

JOLTING TALES OF
TENSION
IN THE
EC TRADITION!



ONLY SKIN-DEEP

SHE STOOD IN THE CENTER OF THE SUNLIGHT-FILLED HOSPITAL ROOM, SMILING AT HIM, HER EYES FILLED WITH TEARS. SHE WAS A THING OF RADIANT BEAUTY, A VENUS IN MODERN DRESS, SOMEHOW, DEEP INSIDE HIM, A MEMORY SPIROED, ALMOST CAME TO LIFE, THEN FLEW AWAY. SHE WAS PART OF IT, ALL RIGHT... PART OF THE PART HE COULDN'T REMEMBER. HE STARED AT HER THROUGH THE NARROW SLITS IN THE BANDAGES THAT SMOTHERED HIS FACE. AS THE DOCTOR CLOSED THE DOOR BEHIND HIM, LEAVING THEM ALONE, SHE WHISPERED...

YOU'LL REMEMBER, DARLING. I'LL MAKE YOU REMEMBER. THE DOCTOR SAYS IT'S TEMPORARY AMNESIA... THAT YOU CAN COME OUT OF IT... ANYTIME...

WHO... WHO ARE YOU? YOU LOOK FAMILIAR... AND I KNOW YOU... BUT... I DON'T... YET...



SHE CROSSED THE ROOM TO HIS BED, TOOK HIS HAND IN HER'S, PRESSING HER SOFT RED LIPS AGAINST THEM...

I'M GLORIA SWEET, GLORIA ANDERS! WE WERE IN LOVE. TRY TO REMEMBER! YOUR ROBERT ANDERS. WE MET SIX MONTHS AGO... ONLY IT WAS SO IMPOSSIBLE I WAS MARRIED.

MARRIED? YOUR HUSBAND?



SHE NODDED, LOOKING AROUND...

YES, MY HUSBAND WAS CHARLES ANDERS. HE WAS THE ONE WHO DIED IN THE ACCIDENT... THE ACCIDENT THAT CAUSED YOUR AMNESIA. WE KILLED HIM, SON... FOO AND J. WE MURDERED CHARLES SO THAT WE COULD HAVE HIS INSURANCE... SO THAT WE COULD BE FORTUNATE...

KILLED HIM? I... I DON'T REMEMBER BY FACE... IT WAS BURNED, THEY SAID.



SHE STROKED HIS HAIR SOFTLY, CRADLING HIS HEAD AGAINST HER

SOMETHING WENT WRONG, DEAREST, BUT THEY SAY YOU'LL BE ALL RIGHT. I HAVE THEM FROZEN. THEY RECONSTRUCTED YOUR FACE WITH PLASTIC SURGERY

ROBERT SIGHED. I... I JUST CAN'T REMEMBER

SHE LOOKED AT HIM HUMBLY, AND HE KNEW THAT HE'D LOVED THIS WOMAN. HIS HEART TOLD HIM

IN A LITTLE WHILE, THEY'RE GOING TO REMOVE YOUR BANDAGES. THEN, YOU'RE COMING HOME... WITH ME.

IT'S LATE THAT MORNING.

THERE WAS A KNOCK ON THE DOOR. THE DOCTOR CAME IN, SMILING...

WELL, MR. BICKLER, READY FOR THE AMOPERATION?

READY, DOC.

THE BANDAGES UNWOUND, LIKE TAPES FROM A CHILD'S MYOPLO... AROUND AND AROUND... UNTIL HE COULD FEEL THE SUNLIGHT ON HIS FACE...

THERE WE ARE...

OH, DOCTOR! IT'S PERFECT! PERFECT! YOU CAN HARDLY TELL HE'S BEEN IN AN ACCIDENT

A MIRROR GAVE ME A MIRROR!

HE STARED AT HIMSELF IN THE LITTLE HAND MIRROR GLORIA HANDED FROM HER BAG. THE DOCTOR HELD UP AN ASSORTMENT OF PHOTOGRAPHS...

I CARE TO CHECK AGAINST THESE, MR. BICKLER? MRS. ANDERS SUPPLIED ME WITH THEM.

I CAN SEE, DOCTOR, YOU DID A FINE JOB. IT'S JUST THAT... WELL... IT'S LIKE SEEING YOUR FACE FOR THE FIRST TIME.

IS HE FREE TO GO NOW, DOCTOR?

OF COURSE... ER... YOU'LL SEE THAT HE TAKES IT EASY FOR A WHILE, MRS. ANDERS.

CERTAINLY, DOCTOR. SOB, I'LL WAIT OUTSIDE TILL YOU'RE DRESSED.

RIGHT!

GLORIA WENT OUT INTO THE HALL. THE DOCTOR NOTICED TO A CLOSET...

YOU'LL FIND ALL OF YOUR CLOTHES IN THERE, MR. BICKLER. ER... THIS IS ALL VERY UNUSUAL, BUT... YOU'LL ALSO FIND A BOX WITH THE CHANGED REMAINS OF YOUR PERSONAL BELONGINGS. YOUR WALLET, KEYS... THAT WE FOUND IN YOUR POCKET. THE DAY YOU WERE, OF COURSE, WELL, TURNED

THANKS, DOC. ER... THIS IS ALL VERY UNUSUAL, BUT... WELL... JUST WHO IS MRS. ANDERS?

MR. ANDERS, THE MAN WHO DIED IN THE ACCIDENT, WAS A VERY CLOSE FRIEND OF YOURS, MR. SICKLE. HIS WIDOW, MRS. ANDERS, HAS BEEN MOST KIND. SHE IS VERY CONCERNED ABOUT YOU. YOU'RE VERY LUCKY!

I... I QUOTE I AM?



GLORIA WAS WAITING FOR HIM IN THE HALL. SHE LED HIM OUT OF THE HOSPITAL AND INTO THE STREET TO A WAITING CAR...

LIVE IT, HONESTY IT'S NEW. IT'S ALL YOURS CHARLES'S INSURANCE MONEY PAID FOR IT. DO YOU THINK YOU CAN DRIVE IT?

I'LL TRY, JUST TELL ME WHERE TO GO...



SHE SAT BESIDE HIM AS HE DROVE THE NEW CAR OUT OF THE CITY...

YOU SAY WE KILLED YOUR HUSBAND?

WELL, TO BE PRECISE, YOU KILLED HIM, BUT LET'S NOT TALK ABOUT THAT NOW, YES.



SHE SHUGGLED UP WARILY AGAINST HIM, BRUSHING HER HAIR AGAINST HIS CHEEK...

LET'S TALK ABOUT *ME*... WHAT WE'LL BE DOING IN THE NEXT FEW DAYS... WEEKS... MONTHS... YEARS...

TO... LIVE TO TALK ABOUT IT, GLORIA, IT'S IMPORTANT. I'VE GOT TO KNOW I'VE GOT TO REMEMBER.



GLORIA BEGAN, AS SHE SPOKE, HE TRIED TO PICTURE THE SCENE, TRIED TO RECALL IT... TRIED TO PULL IT FROM BEHIND THE BLACK CURTAIN THAT HUNG OVER HIS PAST...

YOU AND CHARLES BELONGED TO THE SAME CLUB. YOU WERE VERY GOOD FRIENDS. ABOUT SIX MONTHS AGO, CHARLES INVITED YOU HOME... FOR DINNER...



'IT WAS THE FIRST TIME WE'D MET. WE FELL IN LOVE ALMOST IMMEDIATELY. CHARLES NEVER KNEW HE WAS COMPLETELY FOOLED. WE SAW EACH OTHER OFTEN AFTER THAT... EVERY CHANCE WE COULD. ONE DAY, WHEN CHARLES WAS OUT OF TOWN, I CALLED YOU... ASKED YOU TO COME TO THE HOME.'

THIS IS STAFF, GLORIA. WHAT IF SOMEONE SHOULD SEE ME HERE?

NO ONE WILL SEE YOU, AND CHARLES IS OUT OF TOWN. WELL, DON'T JUST STAND THERE. KISS ME...



THAT WAS THE DAY I TOLD YOU MY PLAN...

MURDER HIM, GLORIA? BUT WE'D BE CAUGHT?

NONSENSE! I'VE THOUGHT IT ALL OUT. NOW HERE'S WHAT YOU DO. MAKE SOME EXCUSE TO HAVE HIM DRIVE YOU OUT TO THE CLUB NEXT WEEK. TELL HIM YOUR CAR IS BEING REPAIRED.



IT WAS A SIMPLE PLAN...

THEN, WHEN YOU GET TO THE TURN OF THE ROAD BY THE DEEP RAFFONE... MAKE HIM STOP. KNOCK HIM UNCONSCIOUS... GET OUT... PUSH THE CAR OVER INTO THE RAVINE... AND THEN, TO DESTROY ANY EVIDENCE, SET FIRE TO THE CAR.



AND IT HAD A DOUBLE REWARD...

CHARLES CARRIES A MORE ARRANGANCE POLICY, WITH DOUBLE INSURANCE. WE'LL DON'T BE KILLING TWO BIRDS WITH ONE STONE. WE'LL BE RID OF HIM... AND... WE'LL BE RICH.



YOU WERE A LITTLE WARY, BUT I CONVINCED YOU!

DARLING... IT COULD BE **BABY...** LIKE THIS ALWAYS... NOT JUST THESE FEW STOLEN MOMENTS. SAY YOU'LL DO IT!



GLORIA BRUSHES

THAT'S IT? YOU TOOK OVER FROM THERE? THE FOLLOWING WEEK, YOU CALLED... MADE THE APPOINTMENT... AND CHARLES LEFT TO DRIVE YOU OUT. THAT'S ALL I KNEW UNTIL I HEARD ABOUT THE WRECK AND LEARNED THAT YOU WERE IN IT, TOO?

I... I CAN'T SEEM TO RECALL. PERHAPS WHEN I SET FIRE TO THE CAR, THE GAS TANK...



HE SUDDENLY SHOUTED, HIS EYES WIDE...

THAT'S IT, GLORIA? I REMEMBER SOMETHING! I REMEMBER THE GAS TANK EXPLODING?

SEE, HONEY? SEE? IT'LL ALL COME BACK... SOON.



GLORIA GUIDED HIM TO A JUSTICE OF THE PEACE... AND AFTER THE WEDDING CEREMONY, THEY DROVE ONTO A DESERTED CANYON, DEEP IN THE WOODS...

I WANTED THIS PLACE SO WE'D BE ALONE, AND YOU'D HAVE PEACE AND QUIET.

IT'S A LOVELY PLACE, GLORIA.



THAT EVENING, THEY SAT, CONTENTEDLY, BEFORE A ROARING FIRE.

YOU KNOW, GLORIA... WHEN I FIRST SAW YOU THIS MORNING, I KNEW I'D LOVED YOU BACK THEN... BACK IN MY PAST. I LOVE YOU NOW.

SOB, DARLING. IT WAS WORTH IT... ALL OF IT... JUST FOR THIS DAY OF REDEMPTION... LET ALONE ALL OF THE YEARS... AHEAD.



NIGHT BOTTLED AROUND THE CABIN. HE LAY AWAKE, LISTENING TO HER QUIET BREATHING, IMAGINING HER TIGHT PUPPLES...

I... I CAN'T REMEMBER ANY OF THE INCIDENTS SHE TOLD ME EXCEPT FOR THAT EXPLOSION. BUT... WHAT'S THE DIFFERENCE?! I LOVE HER. I KNOW THAT! WHAT WE'VE DONE IS WRONG, BUT WHAT CAN I DO? IF I HAVE MYSELF UP TO THE POLICE, SHE'D BE PUNISHED TOO!



HE DOES YAKKING...?

I NEED A CIGARETTE... THAT'S WHAT I NEED.



HE MOVED ACROSS THE DARKENED ROOM TOWARD THE DRESSER...



GOOFFFF...

HE FLAILED...THE SCATTER-HAS BRIDGES OUT FROM UNDER HIM. AS HE FELL, HE STRUCK HIS HEAD...



GLORIA SAT UP, WIDE-EYED...

BOOFFFF! THAT TUFF! ARE YOU ALL RIGHT?



HE STOOD OVER HER BED, HIS HANDS TENSED LIKE HUNG CLAWS...



I'M... ALL RIGHT... NOW... GLORIA!

BOOFFFF! I EEE...

THE CLAW THROD DOWNWARD, GRIPPING GLORIA'S THIN WHITE NECK, CUTTING OFF HER SHRIEL SCREAM... CUTTING OFF HER AIR... CUTTING OFF HER LIFE...



S-O-S-A-A-A... BOOFFFF!

HE SAT WITH HIS HEAD BOWED UNDER THE BRILLIANT OVERHEAD LIGHT. THEY STOOD AROUND HIM, IN THE SHADOWS...THE DETECTIVES...THE GOONER...

SAY, WHY DID YOU KILL HER?
SCARLEST EVEN IF YOUR MURDER DID COME BACK...
WHY KILL HER?

IT WAS JUST LIKE SEEING A MOVIE!
I STRUCK MY HEAD AND IT FLASHED BEFORE MY EYES. I SAW IT ALL...



... AS IF IT WAS THE ACCIDENT AT A FLAP. I SAW CHARLES, COMING HOME FROM A BUSINESS TRIP... UNEXPECTEDLY... LETTING HIMSELF INTO HIS HOUSE... READING...

WHEN YOU GET TO THE FURN IN THE ROAD BY THE DEE? HAVING... MAKE HIS STOP... KNOCK HIM UNCONSCIOUS... AND BOB GET OUT... PUSH THE CAR OVER INTO THE HAYCOCK.

GLORIA
WHERE...
AND BOB
SUCKLES?



"I SAW GLORIA AND BOB FROM AFAR... LIKE AN ONLOOKER PEERING THROUGH A WINDOW..."

CHARLES CARRIES A HOME INSURANCE POLICY WITH DOUGLE INDEPENDENT. WE'LL BE KILLING TWO BIRDS WITH ONE STONE.



"I SAW CHARLES LET HIMSELF OUT, GENTLY, AS..."

DARLING... IT COULD BE LIKE THIS ALWAYS. NOT JUST THESE FEW STOLEN MOMENTS, SAY YOU'LL DO IT?

SAY?



"AND I SAW HIM ANSWERING THE PHONE A WEEK LATER..."

CHARLES? THIS IS BOB SUCKLES, SIR. COULD YOU DO ME A FAVOR, CHARLES?

SURE, BOB? WHAT IS IT?



"I SAW CHARLES ANDERSON WALK INTO A TRAP, UNWITTINGLY..."

IT'S REAL SWEET OF YOU TO DO FIVE ON SUCH SHORT NOTICE, CHARLES, BUT I MUST GET MY GEAR. I'VE GOT AN IMPORTANT GAME TOMORROW AT MY CLIENT'S COURSE...

THINK NOTHING OF IT, BOB. PLEASE TO DO IT.



"AND THEN I SAW WHY..."

YOU'RE... YOU'RE STOPPING, CHARLES? WHAT'S... HURRY?

SURPRISED, BOB? I KNOW YOU WOULD BE, WE HADN'T REACHED THE FURN, YET, HAVE WE? GET OUT? THIS IS A GUN?



I SAW IT ALL, AS THOUGH I WERE WATCHING A TV SHOW. I SAW CHARLES FORCE BOB OUT OF THE CAR, AND DEMAND...

TAKE OFF YOUR CLOTHES, BOB.

WHAT IS THIS, CHARLIE? WHAT'S THE IDEAS?



I HEARD THEIR ANGRY WORDS...

I OVERTHEARD YOUR PLANS TO KILL MENOR, FOWERS AND MY LONDON WIFE'S MUM. I AM GOING TO DIE... SHE'LL FORGET! ONLY IT WILL BE YOU WITH MY IDENTIFICATION...



AND WON'T SHE BE SURPRISED WHEN I SHOW UP, INSTEAD OF YOU, AFTER THE INSURANCE COMPANY HAS PAID OFF...

IT WAS ALL NEW IDEAS, CHARLIE? REALLY? I... I...



OH, DON'T WORRY, BOB, SHE WON'T LIVE LONG EITHER, AND AFTER I KILL HER, I'M GOING TO GIVE MYSELF UP TO THE POLICE.



I WATCHED THEM EXCHANGE CLOTHES AND IDENTIFICATION, THEN I SAW CHARLES LIFT THE GUN Muzzle AND BRING IT DOWN ON BOB'S HEAD...



THE VICTIM BECAME THE VICTOR. I SAW CHARLES BRIB BOB'S SUBORDINATES GET BACK INTO THE CAR.



I SAW THE CAR DRIVE TO THE EDGE OF THE BANK. SAW CHARLES GET OUT...



... SAW THE CAR GO OVER AND OVER WITH BOB'S BODY INSIDE, DRESSED IN CHARLES'S CLOTHING, WITH CHARLES'S IDENTIFICATION...



I SAW CHARLES SCURRY DOWN INTO THE BARRAGE TOWARD THE SMASHED CAR... WATCHED HIM STRIKE A MATCH...



... WATCHED HIM TOSS IT TOWARD THE GASOLINE-BOARDED WHEEL... HEARD THE EAR-SPLITTING EXPLOSION THAT FOLLOWED...



... SAW THE SUDDEN SHEET OF FLAME THAT BROT ALONG THE DRILLED GASOLINE STREAM BEFORE CHARLES, ENVELOPING HIM... BURNING... SCORCHING... CHARRING...



HE SAT WITH HIS HEAD BOWED UNDER THE BRILLIANT OVERHEAD LIGHT. THEY STOOD AROUND HIM, BACK IN THE SHADOWS... THE DETECTIVES... THE DOCTOR...



I SAW IT ALL, IN THAT FLASH, WHEN I STRUCK MY HEAD, AND MY MEMORY RETURNED...

DO YOU KILLED HER?

YES... WHAT FLORIDA DIDN'T KNOW, AND WHAT FDO DIDN'T KNOW, AND WHAT I DIDN'T KNOW, UNTIL I STRUCK MY HEAD... WAS



... BOB SHOOTER DIED IN THAT BURNING CAR, I KILLED HIM! SINCE YOU FOUND MY IDENTIFICATION ON HIS BODY, YOU NATURALLY THOUGHT IT WAS ME... AND...



... AND SINCE YOU FOUND BOB SHOOTER'S IDENTIFICATION ON MY BURNED BODY, YOU NATURALLY THOUGHT I WAS BOB SHOOTER. WHEN YOU CONTACTED MY WIFE SHE BROUGHT HIS PHOTOGRAPHS AND THE DOC GAVE ME HIS FACE! BUT I THINK, AS I WAS KILLED AND FLORIDA REALIZED I WAS REALLY HER HUSBAND, CHARLES ANDERS!

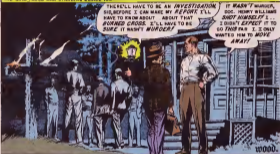


BLOOD-BROTHERS

A LAST FAINT WHISP OF SMOKE CURLED UPWARD FROM THE BLACKENED AND CHARRED CROSS THAT STILL STOOD GROTESQUELY UPON THE BURNED LAWN AS THEY BROUGHT THE BODY OUT. OLD DOC FALK, THE CORONER WHO HAD DRIVEN OVER FROM THE COUNTY SEAT TO SIGN THE DEATH CERTIFICATE, WATCHED AS THE DRAPEE STRETCHER WAS MOVED THROUGH THE DAFING SILENT CROWD TO THE HORSE WAGON. HE SHOOK HIS HEAD. HE LOOKED UP AT THE GRAY FACED MAN STANDING BESIDE HIM.

THEY'LL HAVE TO BE AN INVESTIGATION
SIR, BEFORE I CAN MAKE MY REPORT I'LL
HAVE TO KNOW ABOUT ABOUT THAT
BURNED CROSS. I'LL HAVE TO BE
SURE IT WASN'T MURDER!

IT WASN'T MURDER,
DOC. HENRY WILLIAMS
SHOOT HIMSELF! ...
I DIDN'T EXPECT IT TO
GO THIS FAR. I ONLY
WANTED HIM TO MOVE
AWAY!



WOOD.

YOU WANTED HIM TO MOVE AWAY
SIR? WHY? I THOUGHT YOU
TWO WERE SURE GOOD FRIENDS.
SHUCKS, WHEN I WAS APPOINTED
CORONER AND MOVED OVER TO THE
COUNTY SEAT, YOU AND HENRY
WERE LIKE...

I FROD OUT A
FEW THINGS SINCE
THEN, DOC. THING
I DON'T LIKE.
THINGS THAT
MADE A
DIFFERENCE...



THE HORSE WAGON WHEED SEATS AND HOARD OFF.
THE CROWD BEGAN TO BREAK UP. DOC FALK STUDIED THE
GRAY FACED MAN BESIDE HIM.

YOU BETTER TELL ME
ABOUT IT, SIR. IT'LL ALL
COME OUT AT THE ANNUET
ANYWAY!

WELL, DOC. IT ALL BEGAN
WHEN JED MULLTAN PUT
HIS HORSE UP FOR SALE.
JED LIVED OVER THERE...
ACROSS THE STREET.



"JOE'S HAD THE PLACE ON THE MARKET FOR A FEW MONTHS WHEN A FLUROR STARTED. ELLA, MY WIFE, HEARD IT FROM MRL. MORGAN AND SHE TOLD ME.

THAT'S **RIGHT** AND WE CAN'T LET THAT HAPPEN, ELLA. WE JUST CAN'T.



"THAT NIGHT, I WENT NEXT DOOR TO MCE HENRY. I TOLD HIM THE NEWS."

DID YOU HEAR ABOUT **JOE MARTIN**, HENRY? HE'S HAD AN OFFER TO **BUY HIS PLACE**.

WHY THAT'S **SPELL!** HE'S BEEN **ARRANGED** TO SELL.



SPELL! IT'S BAD... **FERT** BAD, HENRY. WE'VE GOT TO TALK HIM **OUT OF ACCEPTING IT!** HE'S HAD AN OFFER FROM A **NEGRO FAMILY**.

OH! WILL THAT'S WORSE WITH THAT?



WHAT'S **WRONG**? WELL, YOU **OPIN'** GOT LOSS, HENRY! IF A **NEGRO FAMILY** MOVES INTO THE NEIGHBORHOOD, THERE'LL BE **OTHERS** FOLLOWING, AND **PRETTY SOON**.



BUT THERE **ARE OTHERS**, DID I?

THE **REAL ESTATE VALUES** WILL DROP TO **NO POINT** AND... AND... **WOULD** YOU SAY... THERE **ARE OTHERS**?

DIDN'T YOU KNOW THAT I'M **FAST NEGRO**, BIRD?



YOU... YOU... **NO, BUT I'M CLOWNING**, HENRY! I'M **SERIOUS**! IF WE LET A **NEGRO FAMILY**...



I'M **NOT CLOWNING**, BIRD! MY **GRANDMOTHER** WAS A **REPROTES** YOU SEE, I'M **FAST NEGRO**.

WHY... **WHY** DIDN'T YOU EVER TELL ME? I **NEAR**, I **NEVER**... I...

I DIDN'T TELL YOU BECAUSE I DIDN'T THINK IT WAS **IMPORTANT**, DID I?



THE CROWD HAD SORE OFF INTO THE SILENT GARRIBUS, NOW. SID AND OLD DOC PALE STOOD ALONE BEFORE THE EMPTY HOUSE WITH THE BURNED CROSS OF THE FRONT LAWN...

AT FIRST, I WAS SHOCKED, NO DOG... BEMILDERED? IMAGINE! MY OWN NEIGHBOR, MY FRIEND WITH REDD BLOOD IN HIS VEINS...



LATER THAT NIGHT, I TOLD ELLA...

THAT WAS A **HOT TEN** TRICK, ELLA... WHEN YOU GOING TO DO, SID? LIVING HERE J&L THERE FEARS AND NEVER TELLING US!

WHAT ARE YOU GOING TO DO, SID?



I DON'T KNOW! HE SAID HE DIDN'T THINK IT WAS IMPORTANT! BUT IT IS IMPORTANT, ELLA... WITH NEW LIVING HERE, AND JED MARTIN THINKING OF SELLING HIS PLACE TO COLORED FOLKS, WHY WOULD THE NEIGHBORHOOD'S COME CHANGE? OUR KIDS WILL BE PLAYIN' WITH COLORED KIDS...

AND... AND...



THEN I GOT ANGRY, DOC...

I'M NOT GOING TO LET THAT HAPPEN, ELLA. I PUT A LOT OF MONEY AND WORK AND SWEAT INTO THIS PLACE. I'M NOT GOING TO SEE IT GO DOWN THE DRAIN. THIS IS OUR HOME, IN A **DECENT** NEIGHBORHOOD! NOBODY'S GOING TO **RUIN** IT FOR US! **NOBODY!**



I WENT TO SEE JED MARTIN...

THERE'S A **WONDER** AROUND THAT YOU **WOULDN'T** SELL YOUR PLACE TO A **NEEDY** FAMILY, JED? I **HOPED** IT WASN'T **TRUE!**

I **DID** GET AN **OFFER**, SID... BUT I **WOULDN'T** DO THAT TO YOU AND THE **REST** OF THE FOLKS! NO, I'M **NOT** SELLIN'... **NOT** TO THEM... **NOT** IF FOLKS ROUND **HERE** DON'T **WANT** ME TO!



WITH JED TAKEN CARE OF, I STARTED BROODING ABOUT HENRY WILLIAMS, MY PART-NEGO NEXT DOOR NEIGHBOR...

WHAT'S UP, SID?

I'M THINKING ABOUT THE WILLIAMS'S, ELLA. I'M THINKING ABOUT GO LIVING NEXT TO A **FAMILY** WITH **REDD** BLOOD. I'M THINKING ABOUT MAYBE IT'D BE **BETTER** IF THEY **MOVED** AWAY!



MOVE AWAY! HUH, NOW WILL YOU MAKE THEM DO THAT? **HA!**, IF THEY DON'T **WANT** TO?

THEY'LL **WANT** TO, ELLA... WHEN I'M **TRIPPING!** YOU'LL **SEE!**



LITTLE FLOCKS OF WHITE MEN
FELL AWAY FROM THE CRUDE
CHAPPED CROSS STANDING ON THE
SINED LANE. BO STARED AT IT
AS HE SPOKE...

SO I STARTED MY CAMPAIGN
DOC. I WAS GOING TO GET RID
OF HENRY WILLIAMS AND HIS
FAMILY, NO MATTER WHAT.



"I WISHED MY KID..."

...SO IF I CATCH EITHER
ONE OF YOU PLAYING
WITH THE WILLIAMS
KID, I'LL **SHOOT**
HIM.

YES,
PAPA!



"I SPOKE TO PEOPLE..."

OF COURSE, IF YOU WANT
TO DEAL WITH COLORED
FOLKS, THAT'S **DEAL**
WITH ME, ONLY I'LL
TAKE MY BUSINESS
ELSEWHERE!

I UNDER-
STAND, BO?
NEEDS BLOOD,
DON'T
THANKS...



I HAD A FENCE PUT UP BETWEEN HENRY'S PROPERTY
AND MINE...

BO, I'D LIKE TO
TALK TO YOU!

I GOT NOTHING TO
SAY TO YOU, HENRY!



"AND I WAITED. BUT HENRY DON'T TAKE THE HINT, I
GUESS. I WATCHED HIS KID, PLAYING BY HIMSELF, SURVIVED
BY THE OTHER KIDS..."



"AND I WATCHED HIS GROCERY ORDERS COME FROM
STORES THAT DIDN'T WANT DEALING WITH HIS KID..."



"SO I MADE A PHONE CALL. I CALLED HENRY WILLIAMS'
EMPLOYER..."

YES, MR. WILLIAMS? I WON'T GIVE YOU MY
WORD FOR ME? WHO'S NAME, MR. ABLEY, BUT
IS THIS? HERE'S A TIP! OF COURSE,
IF YOUR FIRM DOESN'T WANT
EMPLOYING NEGROES, IT
WON'T MATTER! DID YOU
KNOW THAT MR. WILLIAMS
HAS **NEEDS BLOOD**!



... AND THAT NIGHT I WATCHED FROM MY WINDOW AS HENRY WILLIAMS CAME HOME WITH HIS SEVENTY-FIVE DOLLAR PAY IN HIS POCKET AND NO JOB TO GO TO THE NEXT DAY...



'AND THEN SARAH *WIFE* WILLIAMS GOT SICK, AND HENRY WENT TO THE BANK TO BORROW MONEY SO SHE COULD HAVE PROPER MEDICAL CARE, ONLY I'D SPOKE TO MR. WALTERS AT THE BANK, I'D WARNED HIM...

SORRY, MR. WILLIAMS, YOU'RE NOT A VERY GOOD CREDIT RISK, I'D LOVE TO HELP YOU, ONLY

I UNDERSTAND, MR. WALTERS!



BUT HENRY STILL DIDN'T SELL ME BEAT HIS KID OFF TO LIVE WITH RELATIVES AND LOCKED HIMSELF UP IN HIS HOUSE...

THE STUBBORN @-#-#



'I WATCHED FOR THE 'FORMAL' SIGN, BUT NONE APPEARED, ONE DAY, I HEARD THE GROCERY DELIVERY MAN BASH HOPEFULLY!

YOU PAY UP WHAT YOU OWE, MR. WILLIAMS, AND I'LL BRING YOUR ORDERS UNTIL THEN, NOT ONE MORE CENT CREDIT!

YOU'LL GET YOUR MONEY! I SWEAR IT! JUST AS SOON AS I LAND A JOB!



AFTER SARAH DIED, I WATCHED THEM CARRY THE WICKER OUT TO THE WADING HEARSE. I HEARD THE PITIFUL SOB-BING OF HENRY'S KID, AND I FELT NO COMPASSION...

HE'LL HAVE TO SELL, NOW...



SO TOMMORROW, EARLIER, I PUT THE CROSS ON HENRY'S LAWN, AND LET IT... WATCHED IT FLARE UP...



I SAW HENRY'S FACE AT THE WINDOW, STARRING OUT AT THE DAMNING FLAMES (CAN YOU IMAGINE?) EVEN THOUGH HE HAD *NEVER* BLOOD IN HIS VEINS, HIS FACE WAS *ASHEN* WHITE...



HALF OF THE CHARRED ARM OF THE CROSS FELL TO THE GROUND WITH A BURNING CRACKING SOUND. SID SHOOK HIS HEAD...

I NEVER EXPECTED HIM TO JUDGE HIMSELF, DOC. I ONLY WANTED HIM TO FACE OFF.

PEOPLE DO UNEXPECTED THINGS, SID!



I NEVER WOULD HAVE EXPECTED HIM TO DO WHAT FOW DID... DAVE HENRY WILLIAMS TO SUICIDE!

HENRY SAID HE'D BLOOD IN HIM, DOC! CAN'T YOU UNDERSTAND?



THERE'S NO SUCH THING AS BLOOD, DOC. ALL HUMAN BLOOD IS THE SAME, WHETHER IT IS THE BLOOD OF AN ORIENTAL, OR AN AFRICAN, OR AN EUROPEAN, EXCEPT FOR ONE MEDICAL DIFFERENCE... THE BLOOD TYPE. BUT WHITE, NEGRO, MONGOL, ALL RACES OF MAN HAVE ALL THE BLOOD TYPES...



I REMEMBER ONCE, WHEN I FIRST STARTED PRACTICING MEDICINE, I WAS CALLED OUT TO A FARM. THE FARMER'S LITTLE BOY HAD BEEN BADLY HURT BY A THRESHING. HE'D ALMOST SEVERED HIS ARM. BY THE TIME I GOT THERE...

HE'S LOST A LOT OF BLOOD! HE NEEDS A TRANSFUSION... IMMEDIATELY!

HERE! I'LL GIVE IT TO HIM...



I CHECKED THE FATHER'S BLOOD, BUT IT WAS THE WRONG TYPE. THEN I CHECKED THE MOTHER'S...

NEITHER OF YOU HAVE THE RIGHT BLOOD TYPE. NONE WENT HERE, EITHER. AND IF YOUR BOY DOESN'T GET A TRANSFUSION FAST... HE'LL DIE...

GEORGE! COME IN HERE!



GEORGE WAS THE FARMER'S HIRED HAND. HE WAS A HUGE MAN... STRONG AND MUSCULAR. GEORGE WAS A NEGRO...

CHECK HIS TYPE, DOC!

ROLL UP YOUR SLEEVES, GEORGE!



GEORGE'S BLOOD WAS THE SAME TYPE AS THE BOY'S...

GEORGE! WILL YOU DO IT? WILL YOU GIVE MY SON THE BLOOD HE NEEDS?

HE'LL DIE IF YOU DON'T, GEORGE. PLEASE...



THE OTHER HALF OF THE CROSS-ARM BROCKED TO THE GROUND, STIRRING UP LITTLE FLAKES OF ASH...

THE WEIRD SAVED THE BOY'S LIFE, DID HE HAVE THE BOY OVER A QUART OF BLOOD?

DON'T PREACH TO ME DOC.



ROLL UP YOUR SLEEVES, DOC!

HUNT? WHY?



ROLL UP YOUR SLEEVES!

LOOK, DOC... I... OH, WELL!



THE TALL MAN WITH THE GRIM FACE ROLLED UP HIS SLEEVE. OLD DOC PAUL TOOK HIS ARM AND LED HIM TO THE STREET LAMP...

THE COUNTRY-BORN POINTED TO THE THIN WHITE LINE CIRCLING DOC'S MUSCULAR FOREARM...

HEHEHE! I DID A PRETTY GOOD JOB, EVEN IF I DO HATE MYSELF!

FOUR??



THAT'S THE SCAR THE FRESHING MACHINE LEFT ON YOUR ARM, DO, WHEN YOU ALMOST STEVED IT OVER TWENTY-FIVE YEARS AGO.

I FF THEN THE BOY...



YOU WERE THAT BOY, DID GEORGE'S BLOOD SAVE YOUR LIFE. WEIRD BLOOD, PUMPED INTO FOUR VEINS, BRANCHED YOU FROM THE JAWS OF DEATH!

OH, DOC.



THE CORNER SHOOK HIS HEAD AND WALKED AWAY. BOB JUST STOOD THERE, THE TEARS STREAMING DOWN HIS CHEEKS...



OH DOC... DOC... WHAT HAVE I DONE...?

AND ON THE BURNED LAMP, THE CHAINED UPRIGHT, THE REMAINS OF THE BURNED CROSS, COLLAPSED INTO A PILE OF ASH AND CARBON...

UPON REFLECTION

THE PSYCHIATRIST'S OFFICE WAS DIMLY LIT AND THE TRAFFIC NOISES OUTSIDE WERE ALMOST INAUDIBLE. JOEY LAY ON THE SOFT LEATHER COUCH TREMBLING, HIS VOICE ONLY A HOARSE WHISPER, THE PSYCHIATRIST SAT BESIDE HIM, A Pencil AND Pencil IN HAND...



I... I GOT ME A FINE DOC. I COULDN'T STAND IT ANY MORE, I WAS GOING TO *KILL* MYSELF. AND THEN I FIGURED MAYBE YOU COULD HELP ME. MAYBE YOU COULD *CURABSE* ME BACK TO THE WAY I WAS. MAKE ME *NORMAL* AGAIN!

I'LL DO MY BEST, MR. BERKMAN. NOW, RELAX AND TRY TO REMEMBER. WHEN ALL... ALL THIS STARTED WHEN DID YOU FIRST NOTICE THESE THINGS? THESE *QUARRES*?

JOEY BERKMAN, NUMBER ONE CONTENDER FOR THE MIDDLEWEIGHT CHAMPIONSHIP, SIGHED. HE LAY BACK ON THE DIVAN STARING UP AT THE SHADOWY CEILING...

IT... IT WAS RIGHT AFTER MY LAST FIGHT. YOU WANT ME TO TALK ABOUT IT. I FIGHTED *MARTY WILLIAMS*... IN THE GARDEN...

YES, I NEED RECALL. *RECALL* ABOUT IT. DON'T MR. WILLIAMS...?



YEAH, DOC. *MARTY* DIED. I *KILLED* HIM. IT WAS IN THE EIGHTH ROUND. I'D BEEN LAMING MY LEFT JAW PRETTY REGULARLY AND MARTY'S GOTTEN GLASSY-EYED AND SLODDY. HE OPENED UP AND I CAUGHT HIM WITH A RIGHT CROSS TO THE HEAD...



'MANNY WENT DOWN LIKE A SNOW-MAN MELTING... FOLDING UP, SORT OF, IN A HEAP, THE REF COUNTED HIM OUT...'



'BUT MANNY DIDN'T GET UP. THE COMMISSION DOCTOR CLIMBED INTO THE RING AND LOOKED HIM OVER...'



'I FELT ALL HIS BONES... SOMEBODY GOT ME THROUGH THE JERKING CROWD TO MY DRESSING ROOM...'



'AND THAT'S WHEN MANNY'S WIFE CAME INTO THE DRESSING ROOM. SHE WAS WHITE AS A GHOST AND HER EYES WERE FILLED WITH TEARS. SHE JUST STARED AT ME...'



'SHE STARTED SCREAMING AND SCREAMING AT ME...'



'THEY CRASHED HER OUT, AND I COULD HEAR HER ANGERED VOICE THUNDERING AT ME AS THEY TOOK HER DOWN THE HALL...'



'I COULDN'T SLEEP THAT NIGHT, DOC! I KEPT SEEING MANNY'S GLASSY EYES STARRING AT ME... AND I KEPT HEARING HIS WIFE'S VOICE SCREAMING...'



"IT WAS THE NEXT MORNING WHEN I GOT UP THAT I FIRST NOTICED MY HANDS. THEY'D CHANGED DURING THE NIGHT. THEY'D CONTORTED AND SHRIVELED AND GROWN DULL AND FRIED."



GOOD LORD! WHAT'S HAPPENING TO ME?

"WHEN I WENT DOWN TO THE GYM THAT AFTERNOON, I KEPT MY HANDS HIDDEN... STUFFED IN MY POCKETS. I DIDN'T WANT ANYBODY ELSE TO SEE HOW HORRIBLE THEY'D BECOME."



I SMATTER, JOEY! YOU LOOK DOWN-IN-THE-EAR! DON'T FEEL BAD ABOUT WILLIAMS, KID. IT COULD'VE HAPPENED TO ANYBODY!

THANKS, BERRY!

"BUT WHEN I GOT HOME THAT NIGHT, AND I LOOKED AT MY HANDS AGAIN, THEY'D GROWN WORSE! THEY LOOKED... THEY LOOKED LIKE..."



...LIKE THE HANDS OF A BEAST!

"AND LATELY, WHEN I WAS UNPLEASANTLY, I SAW MY FEET..."



OH, GOD! MY FEET, FOOT! WHAT'S GOING THIS TO ME?

"ALL NIGHT I TOSSED AND TURNED... FEELING MYSELF CHANGING... FEELING MY BODY... MY FACE... GROWING MORE AND MORE HORRIBLE WITH EACH PASSING NIGHT MOMENT."



MRS. WILLIAMS CHANGED ME! SHE MADE ME TURN INTO A TWISTED SAVAGE ANIMAL! SHE WISHED IT ON ME!

"IN THE MORNING, WHEN I GOT UP, I CAREFULLY CHECKED THE MIRRORS AROUND MY PLACE. I DIDN'T WANT TO SEE THE HORRIBLE MALFORMED MONSTER I'D CHANGED INTO. I GOT SOME SHEETS AND COVERED THEM..."



SEE, WHAT AM I GOING TO DO?

I STAYED IN ALL THAT DAY AND THE NEXT ALONG, NOT EVEN ANSWERING THE TELEPHONE WHEN IT RANG. AND AS THE HOURS PASTED, AND I KNEW I WAS BECOMING MORE AND MORE MISSTRUSTFUL AND HORRIBLE, I GREW FLAKIER.



I FOUND THE SON IN A BUREAU SPINNER, IT WAS LOADED, I WAS GOING TO KILL MYSELF, DOC. I FELT IT WAS THE ONLY WAY OUT. AND THEN I THOUGHT OF YOU. I THOUGHT YOU COULD HELP ME. SO I CALLED.



YOU HAVEN'T CHANGED, MR. DEBRANK! YOU'RE STILL A PHYSICAL SPECIMEN. COME! LET ME PROVE IT TO YOU! THERE'S A FULL-LENGTH MIRROR IN THE NEXT ROOM...

NO!

BUT MR. DEBRANK! I BELIEVE YOU, DOC. BUT... WELL... I, I'M AFRAID!

ALL RIGHT, JOEY! FORGIVE ME! I WON'T FORCE YOU TO LOOK! BUT IT'S THE ONLY WAY TO SETTLE YOUR MIND!

I'LL... I'LL LOOK... AS SOON AS I FEEL UP TO IT!



FINE! AND KEEP IN TOUCH WITH ME! PERHAPS, WHEN YOU HAVE TIME, WE CAN GO INTO A DEEPER ANALYSIS OF YOUR SUBCONSCIOUS, FIND OUT WHY YOU LIKE TO FIGHT, FOR EXAMPLE... AND...

SURE, DOC! SURE! THANKS!

JOEY CLOSED THE DOOR TO THE PSYCHIATRIST'S APPOINTMENT AND STOOD ALONE IN THE DESERTED STREET, INHALEING THE FRESH COOL NIGHT AIR.



HMMM! I FEEL BETTER ALREADY!

HE STARTED ACROSS THE STREET, HIS FOOTSTEPS ECHOING INTO THE SILENT CLEAR EVENING...

SUDDENLY, JOEY STOPPED. HE COULD SEE IT IN FRONT OF THE STORE WINDOW, ITS SILVER SURFACE REFLECTING THE STREET LAMP ONTO THE SIDEWALK IN A HAZY GLEAM OF SOFT YELLOW LIGHT...

HAVEN'T SLEPT IN FOUR NIGHTS? DARN! IT'S THE BACK FOR ME!



...A MIRROR!

JOEY HESITATED, THEN TOOKED
NO HEAD, LAUGHING...



... AND STEPPED IN FRONT OF THE
MIRROR...



JOEY STARED.



JOEY SCREAMED...



... AND TOOK THE LOADED GUN FROM HIS POCKET,
PLACED IT AGAINST HIS TEMPLE, AND FIRED...



THE POLICEMAN STOOD BEFORE THE FLOWING SURFACE OF THE
MIRROR, STARRING DOWN AT THE LIFELESS BODY ON THE SIDEWALK...



THE STOREKEEPER SHOOK HIS
HEAD...



SQUEEZE PLAY

HARRY COVERED AGAINST THE ROUGH CONCRETE PILLAR THAT SUPPORTED THE WEATHER-BEATEN BOARDS OVER-HEAD, SWEATING IN THE WARM SUMMER AIR IN GREAT GULFS, TRYING TO CATCH HIS BREATH. THEY WERE AFTER HIM, SOON THEY'D BE SEARCHING DOWN HERE, DOWN IN THE DAMP SAND BENEATH THE BOARDWALK... SEARCHING FOR THE KILLER. HARRY LOOKED AROUND WILDLY WHERE TO HIDE? WHERE TO HUNT? AND THEN HE SAW THE SHIMMERING MASS OF ALMOST NAKED HUMANITY THAT JAMMED THE SANDY BEACH.

SOPE? THEY'LL BE LOOKING FOR A GUY IN A FURRY AND BOMBARDED IF I WERE OUT IN THAT CROWD IN A BATHING SUIT. THEY'S NEVER FIND ME...



HARRY PULLED HIS T-SHIRT OVER HIS HEAD AND STEPPED OUT OF HIS DUNGEONS...

I'LL BUY MY CLOTHES HERE AND COME BACK FOR THEM LATER...



HARRY KICKED OFF HIS SHOES AND TUGGED OFF HIS SOCKS. THEN HE UNZIPPED AND SCOPED A HOLE IN THE DAMP COOL SAND...

LUCKY THING I WORE MY JEANS UNDER MY BLUE JEANS...



HARRY MOVED OUT OF THE SHADOW OF THE BOARDWALK INTO THE SUNLIGHT. HE THROGDED HIS WAY THROUGH THE SPARKLED SUN-BAKED FIGURES, WOUND AROUND THE SPREAD BLANKETS, MOVED DOWN TOWARD THE MOST CROWDED PART OF THE BEACH.



"WELL, CORA, I'M *HAD* OF YOU. I'M *FREE* AGAIN, AND *NEAT* TIME I WON'T MAKE SUCH A *STUPID MISTAKE*. I WON'T GET MYSELF INTO *THAT* KIND OF A *JAM* AGAIN..."

HARRY SHRIEKED. HE PICKED AN OPEN SPOT BETWEEN THE LAUGHING, MEMORING STOPS OF BATHING-SUIT-CLAD PEOPLE AND SAT DOWN. YES, HE WAS *FREE* OF CORA. SHE WASN'T GOING TO *THE HIM DOWN*. SHE WASN'T GOING TO FORCE HIM INTO A *SNOT-FOR MARRIAGE*. CORA WAS *DEAD*.



"*WOMEN!* THEY'RE ALL THE SAME. *EVERYBODY'S JOSEF... ALL FOR...* AND THEN THEY START TRYING TO *SLAP ON AND HOLD...* THEN THEY START TALKING *MARRIAGE...*"

HARRY THOUGHT ABOUT CORA. HOW THEY'D MET. HOW HE'D TAKEN HER OUT... THE GOOD TIMES THEY HAD TOGETHER... THE SATURDAY AFTERNOONS... THE NIGHTS. AND THEN, HOW CORA'D STARTED...

YES, CORA WAS JUST LIKE *ALL THE REST*. RIGHT AWAY THEY FEEL YOU *DOE* 'EM SOMETHING. RIGHT AWAY THEY FEEL THEY *DOE* YOU. HARRY REMEMBERED THIS MORNING... HOW CORA'D PICKED HIM...



"WHEN ARE WE GOING TO GET *MARRIED* HARRY?"

"SEE, BABY, I DON'T *KNOW*. NOT FOR A *WHILE*, *ANYWAY!*"



"HARRY! I'VE GOT TO *SEE YOU!* IT'S *IMPORTANT!*"

"GEE, BABY! HOW ABOUT THE *BEACH?* I'LL PICK YOU UP!"

HE'D DRESSED IN HIS TRUNKS, PUTTING HIS CLOTHES ON OVER THEM, AND HE'D GONE TO CORA'S HOUSE...

HE'D GONE INTO HER ROOM HER-VOLUBLEY... JEEB ROOM THAT HAD HELD SUCH FOND MEMORIES...

AGAIN, THE SAME ROUTINE. ALWAYS *SLAPPING*, ALWAYS TRYING TO *GRAB A HOLD*, TO *TIE DOWN* TO *SOMETHING...*



"READY, BABY?"

"COME *INSIDE*, HARRY! I WANT TO *TALK* TO YOU!"



"WHAT'S *DOE*, BABY?"

"WHEN ARE WE GETTING *MARRIED*, HARRY?"



"I TOLD YOU, BABY! NOT FOR A *WHILE*, WHEN I'VE MADE."

"YOU'VE GOT TO *MARRY ME*, HARRY! *RIGHT NOW!* TODAY!"

AND THEN WHO? FOLD HIM! AND HARRY'S BLOOD WAS FLOOD IN HIS VEINS. HE'D BEEN TRAPPED. HIS HAND WAS WHIRLED. HE'D THOUGHT FAST. AND THEN HE'D COME UP WITH THE ANSWER.

"SO YOU SEE? YOU'VE GOT TO! YOU'VE JUST GOT TO MARRY ME TODAY!"

"SURE, HONEY! SURE. WE'LL GET MARRIED. BUT WE CAN'T TODAY! THE LICENSE OFFICIAL IS CLOSED. IT'S SATURDAY."

HE'D HIDDEN HIS RELIEF AS SHE'D LOOKED AT HIM, HER FACE PALING...

"MONDAY, THEN! MONDAY! FIRST THING!"

"SURE? SURE? NOW, O'WON? LET'S GO TO THE BEACH!"

THEY'D HIDDEN DOWN ON THE BUS, HARDLY TALKING. SINCE HE'D GLANCED AT HER AND SEEN HER EYES OVERFLOWING WITH TEARS. AND HE'D SMILED HIS TEETH...

"TRAPPED? CORNED? THAT'S WHAT I AM! A STUPID FODDLING IDIOT! AND NOW, I'M CAUGHT!"

"SOB."

THEY'D GOTTEN OFF THE BUS AND STARTED THROUGH THE MALLWAY-AREA TOWARD THE BEACH-BUILD. THE HURRY-BURRY MUSIC HAD ECHOED INTO THE HOT ROOM AIR. TINGLE, CRASH. EVERYTHING WAS CHEER. EVERYTHING WAS PHONE. HARRY'D HATED IT ALL.

NOW, HE'LL BE TIED DOWN TO A CUMBERY APARTMENT, PUNCHING A TIME-CLOCK, SWEATING T'YAN BILLS, AND STATIN IN EVERY NIGHT WITH A JARLIN' BRAT...



SOMEbody HELL! HEAR? KIMP HARRY? HE'D PALLER ALL RIGHT! RIGHT ON HIS FACE! BRACK INTO FROUBLE! THAT'S WHAT GAMES WERE! THROUGHER! THIS ONE! THIS CORA! HE'D HAVE TO MARRY HER UNLESS... UNLESS...

"HARRY! WHY ARE YOU STARING AT?"

"YOU, CORA!"



THE SCREAMS AND THE ROARS ABOVE HAD MADE HARRY LOOK UP INTO THE DAZZLING SUNLIGHT AT THE BLAR OF THE HURLING ROLLER-COASTER CAR WITH ITS FREE-ZED SCREAMING RIDERS...

"CORR! THAT SENDS GOULD UP MY SPINE, HARRY. I CAN'T STAND ROLLER-COASTERS..."

"S'WATTER, HONEY? SCARED YOU'LL SEE SOMEBODY FALL?"



OF COURSE! IF CORA WERE DEAD, HE'D BE FREE-HAND. FREE TO RUN WILD AGAIN. AND THIS TIME, HE'D BE DEVOTED. HE SMILED CORA'S HAND...

"O'WON, BABY! WE'RE GOING TO TAKE A RIDE."

"NO, HARRY! NO! I DON'T WANT TO GO. I DON'T LIKE ROLLER-COASTERS. I'M SCARED, HARRY! PLEASE..."





HE'D CALLED HER TO THE TICKET BOOTH, SHE'D SHIED HIM... PLEASED.

NO, HARRY, PLEASE. I'M SCARED. MAKE IT FITTY, HARRY!

MR. C'WON, CORA, BE A SPORT! TWO, PLEASE...



THE TICKET-SELLER'S SHINNED AT HARRY. FELLERS WERE ALWAYS BRAGGING THEY GOT THE GIRLS ON THE ROLLER-COASTER. AND GIRLS WERE ALWAYS SCREAMING THEY WERE SCARED. IT WAS ONE BIG JARRE.

HARRY DON'T MAKE ME! I DON'T WANT TO! HARRY! WHAT ARE YOU TRYIN' TO DO?

C'WON CORA, IT'S FUN! YOU'LL SEE!



YEAH. ONE BIG JARRE, ONLY TO HARRY, THIS WAS A GAME OF LIFE OR DEATH. LIFE, BEING FREE. DEATH, BEING MARRIED TO CORA.

HARRY! NO! LET ME GO! HARRY!

ATTA BOY, FELLER. MAKE 'ER GO. WE JUST CAME OFF IT. HOP!

THEY'D GRINNED AT HER, THE PEOPLE ALL AROUND. THEY'D GRINNED AT CORA'S SCREAMING PLEAS. ALL GIRLS SCREAMED. THAT WAS WHAT THEY WERE SUPPOSED TO DO. THEY WERE, IF THEY REALLY WANTED TO... AND THEY WANTED, NOT TO, IF THEY REALLY DIDN'T. BUT CORA WAS SCREAMING. HARRY'D HELD HER IN A FIVE-LINE GRIP.

AND THEN THE REALIZATION HAD DAWNED UPON CORA. SHE'D SEEN IT IN HARRY'S EYES. THE GLOOMY REALIZATION... AS THE COASTER'S STARTED AWAY...



THE LAST SEAT, CORA. C'WON...

NO! NO! OH, GOD...



HE'S GOING TO KILL ME... HELP ME! HELP ME!

SHUT UP, YOU CRUMMY LITTLE TRAMP...

AND CORA, SCREAMING... AND THE PEOPLE IN THE FORWARD PART OF THE CAR SCREAMING TOO, KNOWING HER, AS THEY STARTED UP THE LOW INCLINE TO THE TOP.

HARRY REMEMBERED NOW... AS THEY'D REACHED THE TOP OF THE INCLINE, WHEN ALL EYES WERE STARRING AHEAD IN FASCINATION AND FRIGHT DOWN INTO THE STEEL, NETWORKED CANYON INTO WHICH THEY WERE STARTING TO PLUMGE. NOW HE'D GOT CORA WITH ALL OF HIS STRENGTH.



STOP! STOP! PLEASE, STOP! HE'S GOING TO KILL ME! PLEASE! STOP IT!

EEEEEEEEEE...



OH, GOD! STOP! STOP! HE'S GOIN' - A - H - E - E - E - E - E

AND HARRY REMEMBERED HOW HE'D PUSHER HER FROM THE CAR AS IT HURTTLED DOWNWARDS...



...HOW HER BODY'D BOUNCED AGAINST THE BIRDS, TWISTING AND TURNING AS IT FELL TO THE PARK-EMENT FAR BELOW...



...NOW HE'D GONE INTO HIS ACT, SCREAMING AT THE TOP OF HIS LUNGS ALL THE WAY IN

SHE FELL OUT? MY GIRL FELL OUT?



...NOW THE CAR HAD FINALLY GLIDED TO REST, AND THE ROARING AND SCREAMING HAD SUBSIDED, AND ONLY HIS VOICE ECHOED LOUD AND CLEAR

MY GIRL FELL OUT? FIND HER! FIND HER!



SHE'S DEAD BUDDY! WE FOUND HER.

HARRY REMEMBERED THE FACES... STARED AT HIM



DEAD?

SOMEBODY CALL A COP. HE DRAGGED HER ON THAT RIDE.

ANGRY FACES...MOVING TOWARD HIM

IT...IT WAS AN ACCIDENT? I SWEAR. SHE SAID HE'D KILL HER? I HEARD IT! HE TOOK!



GRAB HIM!

SO HARRY'S PLAN. HE'D RUN WILDLY THROUGH THE AMUSEMENT AREA DOWN TOWARD THE SEAWALKS...

THERE HE WAS! AFTER HIM! SOMEBODY GET A COP!



HARRY LOOKED UP. SHRILL VOICES BOGGED HIM OUT OF HIS REVERIE. A LAUGHING GROUP OF GIRLS WERE SPREADING THEIR BLANKET BESIDE HIM...

HE LOOKED THEN OVER. WHAM. NICE STUFF, ANY OTHER TIME, HE'D CONCENTRATE ON THAT KIND! BUT NOW... HE GLANCED TOWARD THE BOARDWALK. HIS HEART STOPPED...

TWO COPS WERE THERE, WHEN HE'D HIDDEN HIS CLOTHES. THEY HAD HIS T-SHIRT, SUNGLASSES, AND SHOES IN THEIR HANDS. THEY WERE SCANNING THE JAMMED BEACH...



OVER HERE A LITTLE MORE, SURE?

DON'T RISK SAND ON IT, SEA!



GOOD LORD!



THEY GOT BY STUFF. I'M SORRY, HOWELL I GET NOWHERE? I HAVEN'T GOT A RICKET AND I CAN'T WALK THROUGH THE STREETS LIKE THIS.

PUT THE CARRIETS IN A SAFE PLACE, MAN!

GAR EYES! HARRY TURNED. HE EYED THE DAMNED. THERE WERE FIVE OF THEM, LAUGHING, GIBBLING. IF HE COULD FIE UP WITH THEM, THEY COULD DRIVE HIM HOME. ONE OF THEM LOOKED HIS WAY AND HE SMILED.



WY MIND IF I JOIN YOU?

SURE, HANDSOME! SEA! C'MON...



OH, IT'S ALL RIGHT, GIRLS. HE'S LONGEROME C'MON OVER, GOOD LOOKIN'!

THANKS! MY NAME'S... ER... JOHNNY!

HELLO, JOHNNY? I'M TUE!

THAT'S SEA, AND THIS IS ANN. I'M JILL! THAT'S JANET!

THEY WHISPERED AMONG THEMSELVES, GIBBLING. HARRY SMILED. THEY WERE PUSHOVERS, JUST LIKE JOHN'S BOD. ALL DAMNED WERE PUSHOVERS. HARRY'D HAD PLENTY OF EXPERIENCE. HE'D DEVELOPED QUITE A REEF WITH DAMNS...



THE CAR CAME OUT WHEN YOU GIRLS CAME ALONG? UP TO NOW, IT'S BEEN A PRETTY DOLL SHIP?

ISN'T THAT SWEET?

HEY, JOHNNY. HOW'S ABOUT A SWIM?

HARRY SMILED. BUT THEY HAD THE CAR. THEY WERE HIS SALVATION...



W-HOT NOW? LATER, MAYBE...

AW, C'MON, BIG BOY? LET'S GO!

BEAR TARDAY, BUNDS!

...HE-BEAR!

THEY GRABBED HIM BY HIS ARMS, HIS SHOULDERS, HIS WAIST. THEY TURNED AND PUSHED AND PULLED HIM DOWN TO THE WATER.



"FEEL IT, GIRLS. I DON'T FEEL LIKE IT!"
"SHOW US YOUR BACK-STROKE, LOVE!"
"O'BOY!"

THE SURF LAPPED AT HIS ANKLES. HARRY SWAYED. HE TRIED TO EXPLAIN... BUT THEY ONLY LAUGHED, TIGHTENING THEIR HOLDS, SQUEALING, DRESSING...



"I... I... TO TELL YOU THE TRUTH, I CAN'T SWIM, GIRLS."
"MOM! HE'S REAL! ALL MUSCLED!"
"HULL LUG!"
"MOM! HE'S REAL! ALL MUSCLED!"

THEY PULLED HIM AND PUSHED HIM, HISBLING, GASPING, CHATTERING, SHOUTING. HE SCREAMED AS THE WATER LAPPED HIS CHEST...



"I CAN'T SWIM! I SWEAT IT! O'BOY! JOHNNY! DON'T! PLEASE! IS HE A SPORT?"

THE WATER WAS OVER HIS HEAD NOW. HIS FEET HUNG, TOES POINTED, REACHING FOR SOMETHING TO STAND ON. THEY CLUNG TO HIM, KEEPING HIM UP.



"I CAN'T SWIM! TAKE ME BACK!"
"GREAT MUSCLE-MAN! LET'S SEE YOU DO YOUR STUFF!"
"LOOK, KIDDY!"

BACK ON THE BEACH, BY THE GIRL'S BLANKET, FIVE BOYS WAVED A GREETING...



"THE PELLEDS ARE HERE!"
"LET'S GO!"
"HIT IT!"
"WAIT! DON'T LEAVE ME!"

THE GIRLS STRUCK OFF FOR SHORE, WHIRLING AT THEIR DATES, LAUGHING, SQUEALING, NEVER HEARING HARRY'S AMBIGUOUS CRIES AS HE THRASHED ABOUT...



"ELIMBY!"
"ELIMBY!"
"I GOT THE CAR WITH ME, MELVIN!"
"I... I... CAN'T SWIM! HELP ME!"

AND THEY NEVER EVEN TURNED AROUND TO SEE THE WATER POURING INTO HARRY'S MOUTH, HIS STOMACH, HIS LUNGS. THEY NEVER EVEN SAW HIM GO DOWN FOR THE LAST TIME...



"BLUR... BLUR..."

THE END